



**Southwest
District Health**

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HEALTH
ADVISORY**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Central District Health Department and Southwest District Health warn Treasure Valley residents of potentially unhealthy air quality conditions from wildfire smoke. Although air quality improved this weekend, weather forecasts predict the return of heavy smoke again this week.

People exposed to smoke may not be able to breathe as deeply or vigorously as they normally would, and may experience symptoms such as coughing and shortness of breath. Unhealthy air quality can have serious health consequences for individuals in "sensitive" groups that include infants, children, the elderly, and those with medical conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or congestive heart disease. Those who use inhalers for asthma or other conditions should keep them close at hand.

Persons in these sensitive groups should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion. Those who work, exercise or spend extensive time out of doors are also advised to avoid strenuous physical activities, especially outdoors, and prolonged outdoor exertion. Everyone else should limit outdoor activities; stay indoors as much as possible; and limit the use of their automobiles. Schools should decide whether to modify outdoor playground and athletic activities during this period of unhealthy air quality. School nurses should be aware of the potential risk of serious health consequences to children with asthma or other respiratory problems.

Anyone who has specific medical questions or is experiencing uncontrolled coughing, wheezing, choking, or difficulty in breathing should consult their medical provider. For general health questions, you may contact Jacque Walker, Southwest District Health in Canyon County, at (208) 455-5447; or Jeri Dodge at Central District Health Department in Ada County, at (208) 327-8525.

Other tips for people to reduce their exposure to smoke and protect their health include:

- ◆ If the weather is warm, run your air conditioner to recirculate the air. Turn the fan blower on manually so it continuously filters the air in your home;
- ◆ Wash or change filters on air conditioners and/or furnaces frequently. Use high efficiency filters, when possible;
- ◆ If you do not have filters on your heating and/or cooling system and there is smoke in your home, you can use portable air purifiers to remove particles (avoid using air purifiers that produce ozone);
- ◆ Do not run or engage in heavy work or exercise when the air quality index reaches 'unhealthy' levels;
- ◆ When outside in heavy smoke a particulate mask may be helpful. These can be purchased at a hardware or building supply store. Protective filter masks also are available at medical or industrial safety supply stores but should be used with caution as they are harder to breathe through. People with respiratory conditions should consult their physicians before using these masks;
- ◆ Stay well-hydrated by drinking lots of water and fruit juices. Remaining hydrated helps dilute the phlegm in the respiratory tract making it easier to cough smoke particles out. Plan on coughing, it is nature's way of clearing your lungs. Avoid caffeine products and alcohol as they have a dehydrating effect; and
- ◆ If you have contact lenses - switch to eyeglasses in a smoky environment.

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